Report of the Accreditation Visiting Team

# Grantsville Middle School 318 South Hale Grantsville, Utah 84029

**April 19-20, 2005** 



Utah State Office of Education 250 East 500 South P.O. Box 144200 Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200

# THE REPORT OF THE VISITING TEAM REVIEWING

# Grantsville Middle School 318 South Hale Grantsville, Utah 84029

April 19-20, 2005

#### **UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION**

Patti Harrington, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Public Instruction

# DIVISION OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND SCHOOL SUCCESS

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# **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Foreword	ii
Utah State Board of Education	
Tooele School District Board of Education and District Administration	1
Grantsville Middle School Administration and Staff	2
Grantsville Middle School Mission Statement and Belief Statements	3
Members of the Visiting Team	4
Visiting Team Report	5
Chapter 1: School Profile	5
Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry	6
Chapter 2: The Self-Study Process	7
Chapter 3: Instructional and Organizational Effectiveness	7
Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals	8
Curriculum Development	9
Quality Instructional Design	10
Quality Assessment Systems	10
Leadership for School Improvement	11
Community Building	12
Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning	13
Chapter 4: Northwest Association of Accredited Schools (NAAS) Standards I-XI	13
Chapter 5: School Improvement Efforts – Action Plan	13
Chapter 6: Major Commendations and Recommendations of the Visiting Team	14

#### **FOREWORD**

The major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate school growth and improvement so as to increase student achievement.

In these efforts, the school staff makes a comprehensive evaluation of the school's programs, operations, and results. The school determines how actual practices align to stated objectives and resulting outcomes. It is a three-phased evaluation: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, April 19-20, 2005, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to increase student achievement.

The entire staff of Grantsville Middle School is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the visiting team. The excellent leadership given by Principal David Whiting is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at Grantsville Middle Grantsville Middle School, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more dramatically increase student achievement at Grantsville Middle School.

Patti Harrington, Ed.D. State Superintendent of Public Instruction

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# GRANTSVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL

# **ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF**

# **School Administration**

<u>-</u>		PrincipalAssistant Principal		
		Counselor Secretary		
Support Staff				
Annette JohnsonRad Butler		Secretary Secretary Custodian Custodian		
Tamsen Andrus Christina Ashby Kris Ashby Mary Berry Stephen Bright Denise Bunyard Amber Burnett	Tom Camp Liz Dalton Charles Dye Mark Ernst Corey Grua Robert Harris Dan Haskell	David Jorgensen Sherry Lindberg Amanda Mathews Paul Mower Betta Nash Dennis Painter		

### GRANTSVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

High quality instruction in every classroom every single day.

### **BELIEF STATEMENTS**

Students need to acquire a variety of thinking skills and use them in diverse situations.

Students learn in different ways and should be provided with a variety of instructional approaches to support their learning.

Students need to communicate with others using a variety of mediums.

Students need a positive attitude and to develop personal responsibility for learning.

## MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Rob Stearmer, Todd Elementary School, Uintah School District, Visiting Team Chairperson

Pamela Yama, Todd Elementary School, Uintah School District

Debbie Herget, Oquirrh Hills Middle School, Jordan School District

Stacy Evans, Albion Middle School, Jordan School District

#### GRANTSVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL

#### VISITING TEAM REPORT

**CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE** 

Grantsville Middle School is a 7-8 grade school with 515 students throughout the school year. It is one of two junior high schools (grades seven and eight) in the Tooele County School District. The school receives students from Grantsville and Stansbury Elementary Schools. Students live in the communities of Grantsville, Stansbury, Lakepoint, and Erda. The organizational structures in the school are by grade level team and by department.

The school strives, through its various programs, structures, and classroom strategies, to develop citizens who demonstrate excellence in leadership, achievement, and character, and who will develop the skills necessary for continuing intellectual curiosity and make lifelong contributions to society.

There are some unique features of Grantsville Middle School. The school was built in 1982 in order to accommodate fifth through eighth-grade students who had previously attended either Grantsville Elementary School or Grantsville High School. One year after Grantsville Middle School opened, the high school burned to the ground. While the high school was built, double sessions were held at the middle school. Middle school students attended from 6 a.m. to noon, and high school was held from 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. With this configuration, the building was subjected to a lot of hard use during its initial years.

In the intervening years, fifth grade was moved back to the elementary school, and in 2002, six grade was moved to Grantsville Elementary upon the completion of a new elementary school, Willow Elementary. The school has grown and expanded to include students from a new community built around a golf course located 11 miles away in Stansbury. The students initially attended Toole Junior High, but in the 1999 school year they were bused to attend Grantsville Middle School. Currently the Tooele School District is constructing Johnson Junior High School on the north edge of Tooele City, and it is expected that Stansbury students, and possibly Erda and Lakepoint students, will be attending Johnson Junior High starting in the 2006 school year.

Due to the recent bond, Grantsville Middle School is undergoing major renovation, including the reconstruction of the cafeteria, locker facilities, and family and consumer sciences and TLC/shop facilities, as well as the addition of seven new classrooms and new office space. Construction began in March and will continue in stages until Christmas 2005.

a) What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of their profile?

Teacher dedication and commitment to student learning were evident throughout the self-study. The depth of the school stakeholders' commitment to improving student learning was clearly demonstrated.

b) What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?

A uniform system for assessing student achievement should be developed and implemented school-wide to allow collection of additional student achievement data. In addition, further disaggregation of disciplinary and achievement data should be considered.

### **Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:**

- The mission statement does not fully define the purpose or the direction of the school, and does not explicitly identify student learning as the priority. It is the suggestion of the Visiting Team that the school review Part 2 of the National Study of School Evaluation for further help in defining the school's mission and belief statements.
- There is a need for time and structures to support further examination of community perceptions and involve them further in the consensus-building part of the mission and belief statements.
- There is a clear desire to increase collaboration among disciplines to create more meaningful curricula. Some teachers collaborate informally with teachers from other content areas, but formal structures to support these efforts are not in place. Interdisciplinary collaborative faculty groups exist on an informal basis and to a limited extent. Therefore, the Visiting Team recommends that Grantsville Middle School pursue more formal ways to support cross-curricular collaboration.
- The school provides support for the work of individuals and groups responsible for implementing school improvement initiatives, but has not fully developed collaborative networks of support within the school community. While there is evidence that some stakeholders have an understanding of the school improvement process, the school has fostered only a limited and incomplete understanding of the change process among many stakeholders, particularly parents, students, and other community members. The Visiting Team recommends that collaborative networks of support within the school community be greatly enlarged.
- Although there is clear alignment between the goals in the action plan and identified areas of need, the school goals as written do not appear measurable. In addition, action steps do not clearly articulate how the goals will be accomplished.

#### **CHAPTER 2: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS**

a) To what extent has the school community engaged in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?

While there is evidence that some stakeholders have collaborated in the self-study process, the school has fostered only a limited and incomplete understanding of the change process among many stakeholders, particularly parents, students, and other community members. Study teams have examined current school profile data, but there is a need for time and structures to support further examination of community perceptions and involve them further in the consensus building.

b) To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?

The school's self-study is an accurate reflection of the school's current strengths and limitations. The school is to be complimented on its objective assessment.

# CHAPTER 3: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Grantsville Middle School's desired results for student learning (DRSLs) are as follows:

- 1. Responsible Citizenship:
  - Demonstrates individual responsibility, integrity, and dependability.
  - Recognizes how individual choices and actions affect self, family, and community.
  - Engages in activities that promote the democratic principles of freedom, justice, and equality.
  - Participates in activities that promote the public good.
- 2. Leadership:
  - Initiates own learning.
    - Demonstrates a positive attitude and personal responsibility for learning and personal development.
    - Uses appropriate strategies to identify needs and goals.
    - ° Organizes resources and time efficiently.
    - Continually refines skills and talents.
  - Achieves high standards of literacy.
    - Demonstrates foundation skills and meets essential subject area standards.

- ° Uses efficient and effective information management strategies to related information and experience.
- ° Applies knowledge and information to the situations.
- <sup>o</sup> Evaluates, interprets, organizes, and synthesizes new information.

#### 3. Literate and Productive:

- Works well with others in a variety or roles, balances personal and group needs, builds consensus, recognizes the rule group dynamics, resolves conflict positively.
- Plans, organizes, and selects ideas to communicate.
- Communicates clearly in oral, artistic, written and nonverbal forms.
- Receives and understands ideas communicated through a variety of methods.
- Accesses prior knowledge necessary to interpret information and construct meaning.
- Seeks clarification and feedback.
- Adapts and adjusts communication to suit needs of intended audience.

#### 4. Complex Thinking:

- Demonstrates a variety of thinking processes.
- Integrates new information with existing knowledge and experience.
- Applies thinking skills strategically.
- Recognizes and monitors own use of thinking processes.
- Predicts consequences when making decisions.
- Considers new ideas and various perspectives.
- Balances reason and emotion in decision making.
- Integrates new information with existing knowledge and experience.
- Demonstrates foundation skills and meet essential subject area standards.
- Initiates their own learning and achieves high standards of literacy.
- Organizes resources and time efficiently.

#### **Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals:**

a) To what extent did the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?

The school has engaged in a consensus-building process that involved teachers and administrators in defining the school's beliefs and missions, but has provided a limited role for other stakeholders, such as students, parents, and community members. Study teams have examined current school profile data, but there is a need for time and structures to support further examination of community perceptions and involve them further in the consensus-building.

The mission statement itself, however, does not fully define the purpose or the direction of the school and does not explicitly identify student learning as the priority.

b) To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success?

The school's belief statements are comprehensive and address key issues pertinent to effective decision-making and policy development in the school. The mission statement, however, does not fully define the purpose or the direction of the school and does not explicitly identify student learning as the priority. High quality instruction is the only identified priority.

c) To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs)?

The school's desired results for student learning are clearly aligned with the school's beliefs and mission.

### **Curriculum Development:**

a) To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?

The curriculum is based on clearly defined standards that reflect worthwhile student expectations and align with the Utah Core Curriculum. The development of the curriculum is focused on supporting and challenging students to excel in their learning. In addition, teachers make concerted efforts to address the diverse learning needs of students.

b) To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's desired results for student learning?

The teaching staff is to be commended for their collaborative efforts within departments. There is a clear desire to increase collaboration between disciplines to create more meaningful curriculum. Some teachers collaborate informally with teachers from other content areas, but formal structures to support these efforts are not in place.

### **Quality Instructional Design:**

a) To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students?

Instructional time is well protected and appropriately allocated to support student learning. A positive academic learning climate has been established. Students are encouraged to assume responsibility for their own productivity as learners, to take pride in their work, and to help sustain the positive classroom environment for learning.

b) To what extent does the professional staff employ a variety of instructional strategies to ensure the needs of different learners are met?

Students are consistently provided with a variety of instructional strategies, including direct teaching, hands-on activities, use of manipulatives, performance-based learning, cooperative learning groups, and technology integration. Teachers strive to use a variety of instructional methods to reach all learners.

c) To what extent do the professional staff and leadership provide additional opportunities which support student learning?

The teaching staff displays a willingness to assist students within the classroom and after school as needed. Cooperative learning structures within the classroom support student learning in many classrooms. In addition, the school provides an after school tutorial program to support all learners. A variety of extracurricular activities are offered and promote opportunities for application and expansion of knowledge and skills acquired in the regular instructional program.

#### **Quality Assessment Systems:**

a) To what extent has the staff developed classroom or school-wide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?

The expectations for student achievement and performance standards are clearly developed; however, consistent school-wide assessment of student achievement is not yet in place. Individual teachers use a variety of assessment techniques, but there is no uniform system in the school beyond state-required Criterion-Referenced Tests.

b) To what extent are assessments of student learning developed using methods that reflect the intended purpose and performance standards?

Most assessments are directly linked to specific instructional uses that promote student achievement and continuous improvement of individual student learning.

In most cases the purpose of the assessments of student learning is defined, but is not consistently communicated to all stakeholders prior to each assessment.

c) To what extent are assessments designed, developed, and used in a fair and equitable manner?

Assessments of student learning and grading practices are fair. In most cases, performance standards and criteria for judging student performance are clearly defined

## **Leadership for School Improvement:**

a) To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning?

The school has established a strong and positive academic learning climate in which teaching and learning are actively supported. There is a culture of high expectations for students and staff. Students feel valued and important. Staff members are valued by the administration of the school. Student accomplishments are recognized and celebrated.

The school maintains a constant and steady focus on instructional goals. The depth of commitment of the school to improving student learning is clearly evident.

b) To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative?

Most decisions are aligned with the school's beliefs, mission, and goals. Some of the decisions are based on validated, research-based practices and the analysis of pertinent data and information. There is limited use of collaborative and shared decision making. Efforts should be made to increase parental and community involvement in the shared decision-making process.

c) To what extent does the school leadership monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness through a comprehensive assessment system and continuous reflection?

The school annually monitors student progress in achieving the essential knowledge and skills for their learning through state-required Criterion-Referenced Tests. A system for more frequent monitoring of student achievement has not yet been developed on a school-wide basis.

- d) To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment?
  - Most of the school-wide policies and operational procedures are consistent with the school's beliefs and mission, and are designed to maximize opportunities for successful learning. The decisions related to the allocation and use of resources usually take into account the school's goals.
- e) To what extent does the school leadership make decisions related to the allocation and use of resources which align with the school goals, the achievement of the DRSLs, and school improvement efforts?
  - Allocation of resources is designed to maximize opportunities for student learning.
- f) To what extent does the school leadership empower the school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning?

The school leadership provides support for the work of individuals and groups responsible for implementing school improvement initiatives, but has not fully developed collaborative networks of support within the school community.

## **Community Building:**

- *To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?* 
  - Positive and productive relationships are established among students, teachers, support staff, and administrators. The school also creates and sustains a learning environment that nurtures a sense of caring and belonging. Interdisciplinary collaborative faculty groups exist on an informal basis to a limited extent.
- b) To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?
  - The school reaches out to parents and families to help engage them as partners in the learning process. There is also a desire for increased parental involvement. In addition, the school provides support for the work of individuals and groups responsible for implementing school improvement initiatives, but has not fully developed collaborative networks of support within the school community.

### **Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning:**

- a) To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs focused on the school's goals for improvement?
  - The school's organizational system and culture are very supportive of professional development efforts. There is some concern, however, that sufficient support is not present to sustain school-wide initiatives, particularly with faculty members who have joined the school after initial training has occurred.
- b) To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?

While there is evidence that some stakeholders have an understanding of the school improvement process, the school has fostered only a limited and incomplete understanding of the change process among many stakeholders, particularly parents, students, and other community members.

# CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) STANDARDS I-XI

Grantsville Middle School is not a member of NAAS. Most Utah public junior high/middle schools are not accredited through NAAS, only by the USOE—it is their choice to join NAAS or not.

#### CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS – ACTION PLAN

- a) To what extent is the school-wide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up?
  - Although there is clear alignment between the goals in the action plan and identified areas of need, the school goals as written do not appear measurable. In addition, action steps do not clearly articulate how the goals will be accomplished. Currently, efforts are being made by the school staff to revise this action plan, and the results of these efforts should be reflected in the next site visit.
- b) To what extent is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, school-wide and system-wide?

The level of commitment varies among the various stakeholder groups and among the members of each group. A limited number of stakeholders are committed to implementing the plan.

c) How sound does the follow-up process that the school intends to use for monitoring the accomplishments of the school-wide action plan appear to be?

There is no clear written plan for evaluating and monitoring progress in achieving the goals of the school-wide action plan. A system for evaluating achievement of each goal and action step should be developed and included in the action plan.

# CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

#### **Commendations:**

- The Visiting Team commends the strong foundation for the accreditation process that has been built under the Dr. Whiting's guidance. The depth of the commitment of the school to improving student learning is clearly evident.
- The Visiting Team commends the culture of high expectations for students and staff. All staff members are treated with respect and dignity, and all roles are valued and acknowledged for contributions made to the learning process.
- The Visiting Team commends the exemplary teaching and learning evident throughout the school. The teachers use a variety of instructional strategies to help their students learn. The curriculum is fun and engaging.
- The Visiting Team commends the high level of trust exhibited among the faculty and students. Students relate well to teachers and feel safe within the school environment. This results in a positive learning environment.
- The Visiting Team commends students for their demonstrated respect to each other, staff, quests, and property. They display school spirit and pride in their school academic achievements.

#### **Recommendations:**

• The Visiting Team recommends that Grantsville Middle School send a team consisting of the new principal, vice principal, and teacher leaders to the

- accreditation Visiting Team Training offered by the Utah State Office of Education as a continuation of the school improvement process.
- The Visiting Team endorses a recommendation made by teachers during the interviews that the school design a schedule to keep the school improvement momentum moving. The schedule should include time for collaboration and reflection, then provide the resources to support this process and pursue more formal ways to support cross-curricular collaboration.
- The Visiting Team recommends that Grantsville Middle School more widely publish and explicitly teach the agreed-upon DRSLs.
- The Visiting Team recommends refining the action plan to better align the components of the plan with identified needs and develop interim objectives to clarify how each goal will be accomplished and measured.